

Kentuckians Honored for Substance Abuse Prevention & Treatment Work

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 22, 2001) - Residents of Boyd, Fayette, Montgomery, Jefferson and Washington counties have been honored for their contributions toward preventing and treating substance abuse in Kentucky.

The Robert Straus awards were given at the recent Kentucky School of Alcohol and Other Drugs Studies sponsored by the Division of Substance Abuse in the Department for Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services in conjunction with the Prevention Research Institute, Inc.

The recognition is given in honor of retired University of Kentucky professor Dr. Robert Straus, an internationally known authority on alcohol and drug abuse, author and former member of two presidential alcohol and drug abuse advisory councils. The Robert Straus awards are given annually to Kentuckians who have provided outstanding contributions in the areas of community work, advocacy, substance abuse prevention and treatment of chemical dependency.

In addition to the four Straus award recipients, two legislators, Sen. Dan Kelly and Rep. Mary Lou Marzian, were also honored for their outstanding leadership and support for substance abuse and mental health services in the Commonwealth. Sen. Kelly, an attorney from Springfield who represents Larue, Marion, Nelson, Spencer, Taylor and Washington counties, was recognized for his advocacy for increased substance abuse treatment services. He actively supported an increase of substance abuse treatment services through the HB 843 Commission. He worked to appropriate \$1 million from Kentucky's tobacco settlement funds for an early childhood development program for substance abuse treatment for pregnant women. A strong supporter of Drug Courts, he has been an advocate for community treatment for non-violent offenders whose addiction to drugs has placed them in the criminal justice system.

"Sen. Kelly's advocacy for substance abuse treatment and his work in the 2000 General Assembly has had a positive influence on substance abuse treatment services in this state," said Mike Townsend, director of the Division of Substance Abuse.

Rep. Marzian, a registered nurse from Louisville, was instrumental in sponsoring House Bill 843, which set up the Commission on Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Co-occurring Disorders. This statewide commission has helped to identify priority funding and policy issues that will address the needs of people with mental illness and chemical dependency.

"Representative Marzian has been a champion for statewide substance abuse and mental health services," said Townsend. "Her commitment to local planning for substance abuse and mental health services has helped to educate legislators and others on many of the unmet needs of this population."

Amy Jeffers, a Prevention Specialist at the Alert Regional Prevention Center in Ashland, was recognized for her prevention work. She implemented a "Free for the Weekend" program involving the community and youth. Through the program, businesses agreed to give discounts and gifts to youth that pledged to stay drug free for the weekend. Also, as a result of her efforts, local alcohol servers agreed to participate in the Training for Intervention Procedures or TIPS.

George Moorman, Interim Director of the East End Empowerment Program in Lexington and co-chair of the Mayor's Alliance on Substance Abuse, received the Community award for his work toward educating and helping those suffering from addiction, the effects of poverty, and involvement with the criminal justice system. He has worked as a mentor for young people with the Families and Children Together (FACT) program and has

donated many hours to help repair damage done by substance abuse addiction to individuals and families. He has been an avid supporter of Drug Courts, a community-based treatment alternative for addicted offenders charged with non-violent crimes.

The award in the area of chemical dependency was awarded posthumously to Jim Spirk and presented to his widow, Carol and his family in his honor. He began work in the substance abuse field in the early 1970s, working with young people in a drug program in Dayton, Ohio. Later he was resident director of a treatment program for people with mental illness, also in Dayton. He was recognized mainly for his dedication in the field of adolescent addiction. In 1991, Spirk became founding program supervisor for Hillcrest Hall, an adolescent residential substance abuse facility in Mount Sterling, the first of its kind in Kentucky. While there he counseled over 500 young people struggling with an addiction to alcohol and drugs. He died as a result of a heart attack on June 11, 2001.

"It is a great honor to be able to recognize Jim for his service in the field of chemical dependency and especially for his unselfish dedication to helping young people recover from addiction," said Townsend.

Lisa Minton received the Straus Award for her advocacy toward establishing Drug Courts in Kentucky. She was appointed manager of the Drug Courts division of the Administrative Office of the Courts when the division was established July 1, 1996. She oversees Kentucky's 12 operational adult and 6 operational juvenile sites; 19-pilot/planned adult and 10 pilot/planned juvenile sites; and one planned family drug court site. Kentucky Drug Courts have received two national awards and the Fayette and Jefferson County Drug Courts are National Mentor training sites. Minton has been a speaker at a wide array of state and national training sessions and has co-authored several publications on Kentucky's drug courts.

Townsend said, "Lisa has dedicated many personal hours to research and training to enhance her knowledge of addiction, treatment and recovery and has developed material in use in all Kentucky Drug Courts."

(Editors note: Photos of award recipients will be mailed to local papers)

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